

SYMBOLS AND TREASURES

Towards a common Ground

There is no doubt that the main throbbing heart of all creative expressions of any kind in any form or medium, is their capacity to coin a persuasive and succinct metaphor or a parable to communicate the author's point of view to his/her audience.

The palette of preference concerning the successful coinage of a parable from man's point of view is based on its power to incite and to provoke the imagination without any restraint or limits, under the presumption of freedom and modernity. This is a very heavy responsibility, the burden of which falls squarely on the shoulders of those professionals in the pursuit of casting parables or metaphors, in their respective specialised vocabulary of expression and who are commonly known as 'artists'.

We learn from the Qur'an that God will hold man responsible for his entrusted gift and how he dealt with such trust: has he been wasteful in making it instrumental to glorify his ego, rather than to glorify his Creator, who endowed him with such a gift in the first place? The choice is given to man without any compulsion; either way he requires a particular knowledge to sustain his views and to accomplish his vision. The acquired knowledge in their egoistic pursuit therefore emanates from their ego. As a consequence, all their judgements are based on their sudden moods and whims as is clearly referred to in the Qur'an. [*Verse 18, chapter 45*] "**And, finally, [O Muhammad,] We have set thee on a way by which the purpose [of faith] may be fulfilled: so follow thou this [way], and follow not the likes and dislikes of those who do not know [the truth]**" i.e. who are not – or not primarily – motivated by God-consciousness, and hence are swayed only by what they themselves regard as "right", in accordance with worldly changing circumstances.

Meanwhile when man endeavours to make his talent subservient to glorify, exalt and venerate [**al-wahhab**] the One who gives freely without thoughts of compensation, man will therefore seek his knowledge from the granter of bounties.

The incomparability between the two sources of knowledge are evident: On the one hand the self acquired knowledge has the same nature of the human self in its limitation of perception, wastefulness and arrogance, driven by argumental skills, sharpened by ignorant flattery and rewarded by the entertained headless masses, culminating in conjectural knowledge, which camouflages itself in the moods of its own survival kit: but it is ephemeral.

A knowledge with such characteristics most certainly would not miss any satanic invitations, since it is based and driven on falsehood, having no hesitation in transgressing the limits, without any regard for the consequences. Reference to this analogy is stated in *Verse 41, chapter 30* of the Qur'an, [**Since they have become oblivious of God,] corruption has appeared on land and in**

the sea as an outcome of what men's hands have wrought: and so He will let them taste [the evil of] some of their doings, so that they might return [to the right path]. As Muhammad Asad has said "This is a clear and direct prediction of the growing corruption and destruction of our natural environment, so awesomely – if as only yet partially – demonstrated in our time, as an outcome of what men's hands have wrought, i.e. of that self-destructive – utterly materialistic – inventiveness and frenzied activity which now threatens mankind with previously unimaginable ecological disasters: an unbridled pollution of land, air and water through industrial urban waste, a progressive poisoning of plant and marine life, all manner of genetic malformations in men's own bodies through an ever-widening use of drugs and seemingly "beneficial" chemicals, and the gradual extinction of many animal species essential to human well-being. To all this may be added the rapid deterioration and decomposition of man's social life, the all-round increase in sexual perversion, crime and violence, with, perhaps, nuclear annihilation as the ultimate stage: all of which is, in the last resort, an outcome of man's oblivion of God and, hence, of all absolute moral values, and their supersession by the belief that material "progress" is the only thing that matters."

Contrary to this is the truthful knowledge unveiled to man by the Omniscient One, **Al-Alim**, based on certainty which guides mankind to the good: firmly rooted, irreversible, and eternal since the eternity of existence is governed by it, a truth free of any analogy due to the incomparable relationship between the Creator and the created, i.e. the doer and his action. The Qur'an succinctly and concisely explains this relationship, as spoken by Abraham; [*Verses 95-96, chapter 37*] **"Do you worship something that you [yourselves] have carved, the while it is God who has created you and all your handiwork?"**

The immediate message of this Verse is that God is the most worthy to be worshipped, He is the One who brought man into existence and man therefore is a manifestation of God's action. But the hidden and fascinating message therein contained is stressing **firstly** that any handiwork of man, such as a statue, is nothing but a direct result of man's action, therefore it is the carved handiwork which is supposed to worship the one who brought it into existence, i.e. the artist, should the statue have any sense of reasoning to do so. Instead the reverse has taken place, it is man who became the worshipper of his own action, and this is a severe oppression which man has inflicted upon himself [*Verse 117, chapter 3*] **"The parable of what they spend on the life of this world is that of an icy wind which smites the tilth of people who have sinned against themselves, and destroys it: for, it is not God who does them wrong, but it is they who are wronging themselves."** Secondly, that as long as any action cannot grasp its instigator then man cannot therefore grasp the reality of its creator [*Verse 103, chapter 6*] **"No human vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all human vision: for He alone is unfathomable, all-aware.**

Regardless of how high human experience might reach, the limitation and shortcoming always comes in recurrent ratio with the size and the nature of the topic to be encompassed. In such a way that the verifier who endeavours to achieve any perfection in his attempt to grasp a fraction in a detail of one of the endless orbits which weaves the fabric of the all comprehensive truth and all its polarities, paradoxes, opposites, and complimentarities will certainly come to the inescapable conclusion [*Verse 85, chapter 17*] **"AND THEY will ask thee about [the nature of] divine inspiration. Say: 'This inspiration [comes] at my Sustainer's behest; and [you cannot**

understand its nature, O men, since] you have been granted very little of [real] knowledge." and only with this conclusion man can understand with his heart what he could not grasp with his mind. [*Verse 46, chapter 22*] **"Have they, then never journeyed about the earth, letting their hearts gain wisdom, and causing their ears to hear? Yet, verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind - but blind have become the hearts that are in their breasts!"** At this point man can also see the divine mercy like an immense spring exceeding all oceans and seas put together where the entirety of mankind swims and drinks from it, all people are equal enjoying absolute justice: the knower and the ignorant, the believer and the denier, the strong and the weak, the rich and poor.

Although all messages and messengers of God are representing us with truthful knowledge, the people have come to hold divergent views about it as it is highlighted in [*Verse 64, chapter 16*] "... **We bestowed from on high this divine writ for no other reason than that thou might make clear unto them all [questions of faith] on which they have come to hold divergent views, and [thus offer] guidance and grace unto people who will believe."** Meanwhile, the best example of truthful knowledge which has brought people together at any time is the geometrical knowledge, upon which Plato (427-347 BC) had commented **"Geometrical knowledge has the effect of making it easier to see the form of the good, and that, we say, is the tendency of everything which compels the mind to turn to the region of ultimate blessedness, which it must spurn no effort to see"**. He went on further to say, **"there is a faculty in the mind of each of us which these studies purify and rekindle after it has been ruined and blinded by other pursuits, though it is more worth preserving than any eye since it is the only organ by which we perceive the truth."** Believing that geometry is a divine language symbolising the coercive laws which govern all aspects of existence Ibn Khaldoun (1332-1406 AD) has also stated **"that geometry enlightens the intellect and sets one's mind right - the impact of geometrical science on the intellect is tantamount to the soap which cleanses the garment from dirt and purifies it from filth and extraneous matters."** By the same token the cube is considered to be the father of all geometrical solids as well as a symbol on the unity in the multiplicity of nature. Kepler (1571 - 1630 AD) has stated **"Now among the regular solids is the first born and father of all the rest, is the cube, and his wife [or dual], so to speak, is the octahedron, which has as many corners as the cube has faces."** Aristotle (384-322 BC), in his treatise on Happiness, went as far as to state **"A man in reality good, and a faultless cube."**

Now through a small story concerning the Prophet David (Peace Be Upon Him) we can deduce the special importance of the cube as the bedrock of man's objective artistry and how it helps us to see the wisdom in the polarity of existence and how to orientate our judgement to accomplish the equilibrium of our physical and spiritual reality.

The story as revealed in the Qur'an [*Verses 21 to 24, chapter 38*] **"AND YET, has the story of the litigants come within thy ken - [the story of the two] who surmounted the walls of the sanctuary [in which David prayed]?**

As they came upon David, and he shrank back in fear from them, they said: "Fear not! [We are but] two litigants. One of us has wronged the other: so judge thou between us with justice, and deviate not from what is right, and show [both of] us the way to rectitude.

"Behold, this is my brother; he has ninety-nine ewes, whereas I have [only] one ewe – and yet he said, "make her over to me," and forcibly prevailed against me in this [our] dispute." Said [David]: "He has certainly wronged thee by demanding that thy ewe be added to his ewes! Thus, behold, do many kinsmen wrong one another – [all] save those who believe [in God] and do righteous deeds: but how few are they!"

According to most of the commentators, the two litigants who suddenly appeared before David are angels sent to bring home to him certain realisations. However, the important question remains to be answered *what makes the judgement of David a just one?* Before any attempt to find the answer to this question I have to draw your attention to a similarly very important Hadith, i.e. Prophetic tradition, in which the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) states **"God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one, the one who enumerates them enters Paradise."** Once again we find ourselves facing the issue of 99 and 1 and raising the question, why did the Prophet mention the phrase **"one hundred minus one"**, does the reality of **"ninety-nine"** differ to **"one hundred minus one"**? Believing that Prophets are endowed with wisdom and sagacity in judgement, they could never pass or utter any statement based on their subjective views but rather on an objective divine knowledge. If this is the case, there must be a **common ground** in the objectivity of David's story and Muhammad's Hadith (Peace Be Upon Them). Nothing consolidates such a claim greater than that the story of David as narrated in the Qur'an.

Bear in mind that the Prophet Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) was a Semitic figure and the forefather of the monotheistic faith, or the notion of worshipping no other than the One God. [*Verse 78, chapter 22*] **" And strive hard in God's cause with all the striving that is due to Him: it is He who has elected you [to carry His message], and has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion, [and made you follow] the creed of your forefather Abraham."** Abraham is designated here as **"your forefather"** not only because he was, in fact, an ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad – to whose followers this passage is addressed – but also because he is the prototype (and thus, the spiritual "forefather") of all who consciously "surrender themselves to God". Like Abraham, thereafter all Prophets who followed him, particularly Moses, Jesus and finally Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Them), they spoke in the Semitic tongue.

The diversity of all Semitic dialects such as Syriac, in the case of Abraham, Hebrew for Moses, and Aramaic for Jesus, are in fact old dialects of Arabic which is considered to be the final phase of Semitic tongue spoken by Muhammad, the Seal of All Prophets. All the pre-Arabic Semitic tongues are based on 22 letters arranged according to their numerical value from 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 forming the bar of ones then from 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 forming the bar of tens followed by 100, 200, 300, 400 forming incomplete bar of hundreds.

Arabic however has 28 letters, sharing the same 22 letters and their numerical value plus 6 more letters, taking the progression of the numerical value in the bar of hundreds to its completion by reaching 1,000. This is obviously a cubic number of 10x10x10, which provides us with 28 compatible slots for the arrangement of the 28 Arabic letters and their numerical value, like this. [*visual prompt*] It is important to mention the compatibility of the trilateral route of the verb in all Semitic languages, and the visual analogy to the maximum of three plains of the cube, which can be

simultaneously visible at one time. Meanwhile the relationship between the derivative words and the invisible sides of the cube become evident. From now on we will refer to this figure as the cube of letters. As we will see this is exactly the very cube which can explain to us the mystery in the story of David and the Hadith of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Them).

Considering the common features in any cubic solid, there are 6 equal square sides, perpendicular to each other, so that they form 8 right angle summits, each of which is the meeting point of three sides, each side has two diagonals, bisecting each other in a perpendicular manner, at the centre of its surface area. A total of 12 diagonals became evident but they are grouped into two sets of 6 connected diagonals each; and positioned to be complimentary in direction to each other. With these characteristics in mind we can identify in the cube of letters 104 smaller cubes in the path of its 12 diagonals, giving 52 cubes in each set of the 6 connected diagonals. Accordingly, every three diagonals should have only 26 cubes. When the number of cubes are counted in the path of any three connected diagonals in a row formation on an equilateral triangle [*visual prompt*] they seem to have not 26 but 27 cubes, therefore this extra cube must be deducted since it belongs to another three diagonals. By the same reason it is the same cube referred to in the Prophetic Hadith as "**minus-one**". Furthermore, upon opening the segment tangential to the inner sides of the equilateral triangle formation it becomes apparent that the inner number of the cubes, as the Prophet said "**is indeed 99**" (one hundred minus one). Therefore, we can safely consider 99 to be a reference to a numerical reality, while one hundred minus one is in fact a reference to a universal reality, based on comprehensive understanding of natural duality, where the manifest and the hidden are intertwined, in all aspects of existence.

As far as the story of David is concerned the two litigants (*khasmaani*) are the two groups of diagonals which are complimentary in direction to one another therefore conveying the meaning of opposing, contradicting, disputing, and contrasting one another in every aspect of orientation, as well as being not only pivotal in explaining the cycle of justice in spatial terms but also performing to us that David's judgement was indeed correct, i.e. it is wrong for the "99" to claim the "1", although it appears that subjectively "1" could be added since it is on the "99's" side, but objectively it is an aggression on the cubes of another diagonal.

The cube is therefore at the heart of the reality of all prophets and apostles of God – after all the Star of David, as we know it, in its flat two-dimensional presentation is nothing but an abbreviation of the two complimentary three-dimensional group of diagonals in the cube. Stressing as much is the message of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) the reality of the cube as a symbol of the Oneness of God to all mankind in *Verse 97, chapter 5*: "**God has laid down that the Ka'bah (The Cube), the Inviolable Temple, shall be a symbol for all mankind; ...**"

as well as

"Behold, the first Temple ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah: rich in blessing, and a [source] of guidance unto all the worlds, full of clear messages. [It is] the place whereon Abraham once stood; and whoever enters it finds inner peace." Verses 96-97, chapter 3.

We should remind ourselves that it was not Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) but Abraham and Ishmael who raised the foundation of the Ka'bah in Mecca *Verse 127, chapter 2*: "**And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the Temple, [they prayed] "O our Sustainer! Accept Thou this from us: for verily, Thou alone are all-hearing, all-knowing!"**"

Clearly, therefore, the Qur'an is unveiling the common ground for all mankind as much as the cube is mapping it for all of us. *Verse 285, chapter 2*: "**THE APOSTLE, and the believers with him, believe in what has been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer: they all believe in God, and His angels, and His revelations, and His apostles, making no distinction between any of His apostles**".

Last but not least, just as diversity of nature is unceasingly testifying the oneness of its Creator and His limitless attributes; man came to realise that the structure of the smallest detail in the vast natural worlds always conforms to the structure of the whole. This phenomena explains the order of growth in nature, which has introduced a new scientific term 'called fractal geometry', which is embedded in the heart of the 'cube of cubes.' This is an inescapable conclusion since any of the inner cubes, if it is opened will reveal the same order and number of inner cubes as the whole, and can carry on opening the inner cubes indefinitely until we fail to see them even with all the magnifying aids at our disposal, and that is precisely what 'fractal geometry' in nature is all about. Lets hope that every human being discovers the hidden treasure of the cube in their hearts, which will orientate them towards the common ground where we will all share the riches and blessings of the Sustainer of all the worlds, all loving, all forgiving, the all merciful God. n

Dr Ahmed Moustafa
London 15th July 2002